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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

27 JUL 1950

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Unless the Soviet Union definitely modifies what appears to have been its previous policy of abstaining from open military action by Soviet forces, it seems probable that the USSR will not attack Iran but will intensify its efforts to build up subversive forces within Iran and to weaken the country by means of propaganda, border activities, and diplomatic pressure. (NOTE: The basic question of general Soviet intentions with respect to the open military action is not discussed here.)

Recent reports of increased activity along the Iranian border have obscured the fact that, for almost four years, Soviet forces have been in a position to overrun Iran without warning. In view of the advantages that would have accrued to the USSR from the acquisition of Iran and of the means at its disposal for cloaking aggressive action in a semblance of legality, it seems reasonable to assume that the USSR has been reluctant to employ its own troops in direct aggression. Although in attacking Iran, the USSR could make initially effective use of Iranians-in-exile, Soviet Azerbaijanis, and disaffected elements within Iran, Soviet troops would also have to be used—a condition that does not apply in other sensitive areas such as Formosa, Southeast Asia, and the Balkans.

Soviet domination of Iran would give the USSR important advantages:

- a. The extension of the Soviet frontiers to Iraq and Pakistan would facilitate penetration of the Near East and the Indian subcontinent.
- b. The USSR would also be in a more favorable position for extending its control over these areas in the event of global war.
- c. The USSR would have access to Iran's great oil resources.
- d. The US would be denied an important potential base of operations against the USSR. Conversely, the USSR would obtain buffer territory between its vital Baku oil fields and the bases from which Baku might be attacked.

State Dept. review completed

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If the USSR were to decide upon an invasion of Iran, it would have open to it several courses which would, either singly or in combination, have the effect of cloaking its action with a semblance of legality. It could:

a. Set out to "liberate" Iranian Azerbaijan with a "volunteer" army of Iranians-in-exile and Soviet Azerbaijanis. Clashes between the invaders and the Iranian armed forces would provoke the USSR to send in troops allegedly to restore order. The Soviet forces could overrun northern Iran in a few days and the entire country shortly thereafter.

b. Create provocative border incidents and instigate disturbances in northern Iran through the use of such elements as Soviet agents, dissident Kurdish factions, or Tudeh Party members. Claiming that such disorders jeopardized Soviet security, the USSR would send in troops to restore order as in para. a above.

c. Invade Iran with Soviet troops under the pretext that, in violation of the 1921 Irano-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, US activities in Iran were making that country a base for attack on the USSR by a third power. Recent Soviet notes have made this allegation and have requested Iran to rectify the situation. The treaty provides that if Iran is unable to comply with such a request, the USSR may intervene.

Past Soviet attempts to subjugate Iran through subversion and intimidation have achieved little success, and the present government is firmly committed to a policy of withstanding Soviet threats and pressures and of maintaining a pro-US alignment. If, however, Iran loses confidence in the ability of the US to fulfill its commitments or comes to believe that the US has little interest in the preservation of Iranian independence, the Iranian Government may feel compelled to seek an accord with the USSR or at least to attempt a course of neutrality. In either case, the USSR would be in a greatly improved position for taking over the country without the use of force.

R. H. MILLENKOETTER
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Intelligence

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